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ABSTRACT

A practicum developed and implemented a nutrition and fitness program for 90 kindergarten and first-grade students in an urban elementary school. The program was designed to make parents, teachers, and students more aware of nutrition and physical fitness requirements for proper growth and development. The 33-week program included: (1) pretest parent and student surveys; (2) parent and teacher workshops; (3) classroom lessons and field trips on various food groups and types; (4) lessons on nutrition; (5) exercise activities; (6) meal preparation sessions; (7) a poster contest and fitness-health fair; (8) a parent breakfast planned and prepared by the students; and (9) a posttest parent and student survey. A comparison of pre- and postintervention survey results indicated a significant increase in the number of the students who would choose healthy foods for meals and snacks and liked to exercise. The data also revealed that parents became more aware of their children's nutrition and fitness needs after the program. (Nine appendixes contain copies of the pre- and posttest surveys, names and addresses of television networks, introductory and thank-you letters to parents, a list of nutritious snacks, and sample recipes. Contains 35 references.) (MDM)

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ED 368 477

Developing and Implementing an Effective Nutrition and Fitness Program for Kindergarten/First-Grade Students Through Hands-On and Community Resources

by

Brenda M. Kaplan

Cluster 45

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A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Brenda M. Kaplan under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved

2-4-93

Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen

Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D.
Adviser

Acknowledgments

This practicum is dedicated to my late husband, Stephen. I'm sure he's watching at this moment and is beaming with joy that I finally got through this practicum.

Next, I would like to thank my children, Lee, and Pam. They gave me the love, strength, and support to get me through this project. My mom, Evelyn, also deserves a big hug and thank-you. She would call almost every evening to note my progress and to tell me she forgot what I loked like!

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ABSTRACT

Developing and Implementing an Effective Nutrition and Fitness Program for Kindergarten and First Grade Students Through Hands-On and Community Resources. Kaplan, Brenda M., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Kindergarten/Primary/Elementary/ Nutrition/Food/Physical Fitness/Physical Education.

This practicum was designed to make parents, teachers and children more aware of nutrition and physical fitness needs that allow for proper growth and development. It was also desired that young children would form healthy patterns of living that would carry them into adulthood.

This writer developed a pre and post survey to be administered to the children before and after the specified unit of work. A survey was also sent home to the parents at the end of the project to see how more aware they were concerning their childs' nutrition/fitness activities. This practicum used developmentally appropriate curriculum, using stories, records and videos as well as outside resources in order to plan exciting lessons for the children.

Analysis of the data indicated that more than 75 out of the 90 students surveyed will indeed experiment with different kinds of foods, as well as exercises, if the opportunity presents itself outside the classroom. The data also revealed that parents were more aware of their childs' nutrition and fitness needs. Children need the exposure to healthy foods and exercises. Children shared with parents much of the information from class discussions and speakers. Hopefully the beginning of good health habits have been formed.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting for this practicum was an elementary school, located in a large, urban southeastern city. As little as ten years ago this community was made up of mostly white, middle to upper class families. Slowly the population changed. The population became a combination of Black, Hispanic and White, Non-Hispanic families.

Many families consist of only one parent, some families consist of grandparents or aunts raising the children. Most of the adults in the community are blue collar workers, ranging from low to middle income. Many children walk to and from school as they live close to the facility. Some children arrive at school in the morning by car and others ride a school bus. At the end of day, many children remain for the after-school care program while others walk home alone or with an older sibling or cousin. They wait until an adult arrives home.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school population consisted of 1,238 students from many diverse multicultural backgrounds. Sixty two percent

of the students are Black, 20% Hispanic and 18% non-Hispanic students. Out of the total school population 53% receive free or reduced lunch.

The school facility was made up of a regular education program, an exceptional education center, as well as a community school. There is a well-supervised after-care program. The regular education program is comprised of Kindergarten through grade 6. The exceptional education center consists of many primary children with exceptionalities, ranging from moderately severely handicapped students to mildly handicapped students. Seventeen children (1.37%) attended gifted classes at another facility.

The faculty voted to establish School-Based/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM) model of operation for the school. This means democratic principles are applied to the educational process. As a result, the faculty devised several proposals for organization of instruction that they believed would increase the quality of instruction for the school.

Because much of the student population is Haitian a workshop for Haitian parents and children was instituted. Many of the Haitian students receive a Home Language Arts program in reading and writing. Unfortunately due to budget cuts, classroom teachers must provide lessons in math and content area, in the regular classroom, using English for

Speakers of Other Languages, (ESOL) strategies. Also instituted for students was a Saturday morning class and an after-school tutorial program to help "at risk" students. Bilingual Curriculum Content (BCC) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for limited English Proficient Students (LEP) are two programs offered at the school. In addition the school offered services for learning disabilities, and speech and hearing classes. Also included in the school curriculum is art, music and physical activities for all students. The school provided each classroom with an apple computer. The school had one partner in the community, namely McDonald's. McDonald's helped defray costs of extra curricular rewards and treats for the student body.

The specific population discussed in this paper consisted of approximately 90 kindergarten students, ages 5-6 years-old. They lived in the immediate area of the school. Many of them have come to kindergarten directly from home; some had prior experiences at day care or pre-kindergarten classes. Approximately 25% of all kindergarten students were limited English Proficient (LEP) students. They were pulled out of the classroon in order to attend this program.

The writer had been a teacher for 18 years, ten at this particular school, the last eight years have been in kindergarten. She had taught pre-school, and primary grades

in various socioeconomic levels. Her responsibilities included being a decision-maker and constantly making plans, implementing and evaluating those plans. One of her most important characteristics was her high expectations for her students. In order to carry out her role, she was non-judgmental, empathetic, had a positive attitude and was caring. She also needed to be a good listener, was able to have effective classroom managment and diversified teaching methods to meet her students different learning styles and needs. She needed to decide which teaching strategies were developmentally appropriate in order to achieve a specific objective. She was responsibile for teaching all academic subjects, as well as health, safety, art, music and physical education. In addition, it was of the utmost importance for her to provide a safe, happy and secure environment for her students.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Five-year-old children ate too much junk food and did not exercise enough. Children brought lunch to school brimming with many sugar filled snacks. Many children (53%) received free and reduced lunch and depended on cafeteria foods which were high in starches and sugars. When children were asked to take part in exercises or walking (the school has a walking path) they were reluctant to do so. When they participated in walking, or other forms of exercise they appeared fatigued, listless and apathetic.

Problem Documentation

Evidence exists that young children need to eat healthy foods and engage in physical activities in order to be physically fit. Table 1 indicated that through a survey administered to 90 kindergarten children, most of them did not know which foods were healthy for them.

Table 1

Results of the Nutrition Survey

	No. of children
1. A good breakfast should include:	
milk, eggs, toast	36
potato chips	54
2. Which of the following would be bad for you if you ate it every day?	
M & M's	40
fruit	50
3. Which of the following type of snacks would you want to eat?	
raisins	23
chocolate bar	67
4. Which one of the following foods should you eat or drink at least once a day?	
fruit, vegetables, milk	21
soda, cookies	69

Note. Administered to 90 children.

Table 2 indicated that 55 out of 90 children came to school without breakfast and appeared tired and slow-moving. Many

other children threw out their lunch. Interviews with kindergarten students further indicated that they ate cereal loaded with sugar and that they did not like to exercise as they believed it would not benefit them.

Table 2

Results of the Nutrition and Fitness Survey

	No. of children	
	yes	no
1. I eat breakfast every day.	35	55
2. I sometimes throw away my lunch.	54	36
3. I like to eat new foods.	44	46
4. I like to eat vegetables.	43	47
5. Do you think exercise (i.e. running, jumping, or walking) is good for you every day?	40	50
6. I like to exercise.	34	56

Note. Administered to 90 students.

Dr. Folland (April, 1992) wrote that most youngsters eat food with "excess fat, salt, and refined sugar" (p.42). Folland (1992) and Vogel (1991) both stated that children today are more obese (obesity increased to 27% among 6-11 year-olds) and are definitely less physically fit

than children of 20 years ago.

Causative Analysis

The writer believed there were several causes for the problem. It would seem that today's parents are not totally aware of nutritious foods for children or perhaps do not have time to prepare for 5-6 year olds. They also may not be familiar with a daily exercise routine. Five-year-olds are too young to know what is healthy for them to eat and therefore need to be made aware of nutritious foods. They also need to participate in a daily exercise routine. All parents, teachers, peers, and the community will need to work together in order to have healthy children. The school cafeteria supervisor and her staff must also change their menu so it will contain less fat, less sugar and more healthy choices for the children. The cafeteria staff would also need the cooperation of parents, teachers, administrators and of course the children in order to make such changes. The county would also need to cooperate in case extra funds were needed. Other causes of obesity among children included watching too much television (Vogel, 1991) and irregular eating patterns.

Relationship of the Problem To The Literature

Review of the literature gave evidence that young children do not eat enough nutritious foods nor do they exercise daily.

Preliminary literature review showed us that most scientists believe that "artery clogging starts in childhood" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1991, p.2). In order for the child not to become overweight, nutritionists recommended restricting the level of fat intake to 30% of the total calories in one's food (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1992). At least three out of four children eat breakfast and lunch at school. These meals contain much fat and sodium content (Simons-Morton, Parcel, Baranwski, Fortholer & O'Hara, 1991). School cafeteria foods also contain many sweets which also lead to obesity (Folland, 1992). The Times Educational Supplement (Hennessy, 1991) reported that such a poor diet, of high fats, too much salt and sugar, puts young children at risk for high cholesterol levels.

Another problem leading to obesity concerned televison viewing. It seemed that many youngsters spend as much time in front of a television as they do attending school (Neafsey, Jensen, & Burklund, 1985). It is during this time that much between meal snacking is taking place. Rothlein, (1989) also felt that the commercials glamorize poor eating habits and encourage children to eat junk foods.

Cooper (1992) wrote that school lunches lack guidelines on food preparation. According to the Department of Food and Nutrition (1990), it is the role of school food services to a) adjust the menu which means to provide a "complete...nutrition/fitness menu" for breakfast and lunch and to provide healthier after school snacks; b) The coordinator of the region is supposed to monitor all aspects of food service products. She/He also is supposed to visit the school site and assist; and c) inservice training meetings are held with the food service managers covering nutrition-related issues, progress updates, new food items and menu evaluating. The school site manager must: a) follow the food service procedures; b) serve only approved food items; c) attend inservice training workshops; d) taste new food items and e) promote healthy food to students.

Many children came to school without eating breakfast and Raloff (1989) wrote that children that come to school after eating breakfast achieve higher test scores and generally perform at higher academic levels. Resnicow (1990) reported that children who start their day with breakfast also had lower cholesterol levels and were less overweight.

The American Association of School Administrators (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 1990) reported that one in five teen-agers are obese and that one

in four are plagued with excess weight. Anorexia nervosa doubled, among teens, over the last twenty years. In an Evaluation of Comprehensive Health Education in American Public Schools (Metropolitan Life Foundation, 1988) it was stated that appropriate weight for children was the "most neglected topic in school health-related programs" (p. 14). It further indicated that weight control is definitely a motivating factor to induce healthier behavior.

Greene and Adeyanju (1991) wrote that aeorbic exercises lower the risk of coronary artery disease and also include muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility and body adiposity (fatty tissue of the body). Corbin (1987) stated that in the last 20 years research has shown that vigorous activity will not harm a child's cardiovascular system. Walking, or jogging are excellent activities (Cooper, 1983). Greene (1989) felt that children need to be exposed to different types of activities and Sallis (1987) felt that once a child engaged in physical activities he would promote a healthy life style to be carried over into adulthood. It was found that young children were not participating in the necessary physical activities that increase cardiovascular fitness (Ross and Pate, 1987). Other researchers (Gilliam, MacConnie, Geenen, Pels and Freedson, 1982) wrote that "cardiovascular fitness is not enhanced...during childhood sport and recreation activities, recess or playtime" (p.97).

Chapter III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes projected for this practicum were to encourage kindergarten students to stay healthy by developing healthy eating habits and promote daily regular exercise.

Nutrition: The specific outcomes explored ways to get children to eat a healthy breakfast daily and to extend appealing, tasteful and healthy lunches to all children. Thirty minutes per week were spent on nutrition related education. It was hoped that the cafeteria manager and her staff would cooperate by changing the breakfast and lunch menu so they contained more healthful foods. After a visit from a nutrionist it was further hoped that children would be more familiar with healthy foods and snacks and would be able to identify and make wise food choices.

Physical Fitness: The specific outcomes included more participation in movement activities (i.e. running, stretching, bending) at least three times a week for 20 minutes, and also more participation in basic exercises such as jumping, crawling, and hopping, at least twice a week for 20 minutes. After a visit from a pediatrican and a physical fitness expert (and aerobic instructor) it was hoped that

childrens' understanding of the need for daily exercise would increase. These community resource people discussed the importance of basic exercise and the effect on various body parts.

Expected Outcomes

1. Nutrition: Over an eight month period the 90 kindergarten students would have the experience of being exposed to nutritious foods. Seventy-five kindergarten students out of 90 children would choose to eat a healthy breakfast daily.

2. It is further expected that the same number of children (75 out of 90) would choose to eat healthy lunches and nutritious snacks.

3. Physical fitness: The teacher expected 75 out of 90 kindergarten students to engage in movement activities at least twice a week and basic exercises three times a week for at least 20 minutes each activity.

4. It is expected that approximately 40 parents out of 90 would attend nutrition education and physical fitness workshops to be given at the school site on two different evenings and would be able to disseminate pertinent information to their children concerning proper nutrition and physical fitness needs.

Measurement of Outcomes

Two surveys were devised by the teacher. The first survey (Appendix A) consisted of four multiple choice questions whereby the child circled the picture of the correct food choice. The questions and pictures were to be read orally. The pictures were large, clear and easy for young children to decipher. The second survey (Appendix B) concerned habits about nutrition and fitness and contained six questions that were to be read orally to the children. They would respond by circling the words yes or no. Both surveys took approximately twenty minutes each to administer. These devices were to be used because of brevity, ease in administering and simple scoring procedure. The parents' knowledge of nutrition and physical fitness accomplished by the workshops were to be measured by a true and false survey (Appendix C).

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The goal of this writer was to encourage young children to stay healthy by eating properly and exercising regularly. It was hoped that students a) would become familiar with and motivated to eat a variety of foods, thereby appreciating the importance of nutritious foods that promote growth, and b) to improve cardiovascular endurance by enhancing basic motor skills development. Another goal was to make parents aware of nutritious food and snacks, as well as physical fitness activities needed by their children, on a daily basis.

Nutrition: The solutions gleaned from the literature were varied and interesting. Bockoven and Fuller (1991) suggested a need to establish a nutrition program for school children with the cooperation of teachers, administrators, parents, and food service employees. This solution does sound feasable but considering this particular population involving teachers, administrators, parents, and cafeteria personnel might be difficult. Simons-Morton, et al, (1991) investigated a school-based program implemented at a public

school, to improve students' eating habits and physical activities.

Many children spend much time viewing television and they are exposed to many food commercials (Neafsey, Jensen, & Burklund, 1985). Rothlein (1989) believed that the effect of these commercials had a negative effect on young children. According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest (1992, Feb.) 4 hours of television commercials were reviewed on a Saturday morning in February, between the hours of 8:00 o'clock and 12:00. Table 3 shows the results. The CSPI further reports that in 1991 and 1992 there were no paid ads on television for fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, bread or fish. In 1992 there were 23 ads, out of 263, for reasonably healthful foods; only 6 ads promoted milk.

A committee of health experts (CSPI, 1992, August 3) met and put together a report called "Toward More Healthful Children's Foods." This report set guidelines for 19 categories of food and snacks for children. Marion Nestle, chairperson of the committee said, "The committee strongly urges that children's diets consist primarily of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other unproccessed foods...All too many kids foods are loaded with fat, salt and sugar, which set the stage for heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure in later life" (CSPI, 1992, August 3). Michael Jacobson, executive director of CSPI sent a letter

to major manufacturers stating "Regrettable, all too many companies pander to children's 'sweet tooth' and fat tooths' ...and use the slickest of advertising techniques to pitch them directly to children" (CSPI, 1992, August 3). Jayne

Table 3

Results of Survey on Children's TV

February, 1992

Type of Foods advertised	No. of Ads	% of all foods
Breakfast cereal	87	33
low-sugar	8	
Candy	59	22
Fast Food	35	13
Drinks/Chocolate Syrup	30	11
Entrees, Canned Pasta	27	10
Cookies	14	5
Chips	4	2
Nutrition Ads	7	3

Note. Based on 263 commercials. (CSPI, Feb. 1992).

Hurly, chief of staff of the committee, summed it up by stating "...It's about time they (companies) took our children's health as seriously and cut the grease and salt"

(CSPI, Aug. 3, 1992).

In the spring of 1993 (CSPI) a group of health-conscious youngsters, called Kids Against Junk Food (KAJF) visited President Clinton in Washington, D.C. They discussed junk food ads as seen on television. President Clinton suggested that the children should write letters to the television networks and ask them to lower the number of junk-food ads. Writing letters to the television networks is a wonderful exercise for school age children to take part in and names and addresses of the various television networks can be found in Appendix D. Parents must also be involved and as a group they too should demand that television stations provide more nutritional advertising. It was noted that beginning in the fall every Saturday morning at least two networks will view one of twelve McDonald's produced nutrition messages (CSPI, 1992, July).

Another idea to incorporate in the classroom was cooking activities (Cosgrove, 1991). Cooking allowed the child to use hands on materials as well as take part in language arts, math, and science. However, there are no cooking facilities available in any of the kindergarten classrooms and getting parents to participate again would problably be difficult. The teachers would also have to assume all the food costs.

It is also important for teachers, as well as parents, to exhibit good eating habits in the classroom thereby

exhibiting positive role modeling (Aronson, 1988).

Physical Fitness: Hester, Hunter, Dunaway and Shuleva (1990) suggested testing young children in order to obtain their fitness level so that their maximum aerobic power could be achieved. It was also felt that young children need exercise to be presented in a fun manner (Gober and Franks, 1988).

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

During an eight month period other ideas were explored by the teacher. She spoke with some kindergarten parents and decided to involve them in her project. Parents are extremely powerful reinforcement agents in teaching good nutrition and fitness habits to their children. There were two two hour evening workshops, one on nutrition and one on physical fitness. Through the use of workshops parents were encouraged to be more aware of what their children were eating and making sure that they were engaged in some form of physical activities. Hopefully they would be good role models and choose nutritious foods and ultimately change their attitudes towards healthy foods and exercise.

A parent letter was sent home to all parents explaining the goals of the nutrition and fitness program (Appendix E). The teacher had several community resource people visit the classroom, including a doctor, a nutrionist, dentist and a physical fitness expert. A speaker from the American Heart

Association came in to speak to the children about desirable weight and took their blood pressure. She also showed them how to feel their pulse.

The other participating kindergarten teachers also attended nutrition and fitness workshops. At the parent workshops nutrition and fitness information was disseminated and it was expected that through these workshops teachers' attitudes would help change parents' and childrens' attitudes towards nutrition and fitness.

The cafeteria manager and staff worked closely with the teachers who were involved in this project. They discussed various healthy choices of food for the daily menu. They also promised to visit classes to discuss new food items with the children.

Children planned for a healthy breakfast and lunch to be served to parents. The child also planned to make a cookbook with their favorite healthy recipes and prepared for a K-1 health and fitness fair. Booths with healthy snacks, food and fitness exercises were to be set up. Throughout the program, besides using community resources, there will be hands on materials, (cooking experiences, food) at least once a week, as well as books (stories), music (records), large colorful posters, some ditto coloring and matching worksheets, food cards and magazines. The teacher used as many developmentally appropriate materials as possible for kindergarten ages. Children viewed four

videos concerned with nutrition and fitness.

Report of Action Taken

During the first week of this practicum the two pre-surveys concerning nutrition/fitness activities of children were administered. The results can be seen in Tables 1 and 2. The parent letter was then sent home.

During weeks two and three parent workshops were held in the evening. Unfortunately the turnout was poor (5 parents out of 90 participated). Another workshop will be planned in the fall. The next time letters will be mailed in English, Spanish and Creole. The nutrition part of the workshop included the benefits and importance of children eating healthy foods. Parent cooperation was strongly stressed. Healthy snacks, i.e. spinach dip, carrot sticks, were served. The fitness part of the workshop stressed the importance of physical activity daily in the young child's life as taking care of one's body would be the beginning of forming new and healthy habits as well as avoiding illness and disease in later life.

Another workshop was held the following week (week 4) for participating kindergarten teachers. Sample lessons were discussed and much brainstorming took place. At this time the cafeteria manager and her staff discussed menu preparation with the teachers. They also helped to organize health tips to be broadcast over the closed circuit

television each morning. They visited classrooms and discussed new food items with the children. They also helped organize the monthly family health letter, entitled GET "W.I.T.H. I.T.", ("WELLNESS IS THE HEALTHY IN THING") that is sent home to parents, monthly, and is designed to promote wellness and keep them informed as to the happenings in the school and community. The cafeteria manager planned a "tasting party" for the parents to sample the foods served for school lunch and breakfast.

Week 5 consisted of presenting the children with a general overview of what would be discussed in the future weeks. The children seemed enthusiastic as different foods were mentioned, for example, pizza. It appeared to the children that every food tasting was 'party' time. The class was divided into 5 groups consisting of six children each. They cut pictures from magazines and made posters. Each poster represented another section of the food pyramid.

The next two weeks (6,7) were devoted to the milk, yogurt, and cheese group. This was an excellent group of foods to begin with since most children love ice cream, and still are positive about drinking milk. One of the parents brought in an ice cream maker plus all the necessary ingredients and made ice cream. Yum! It was certainly a favorite treat. A trip to Amelia Earhart Park had been planned at this time and the children, not only saw farm animals, but acutally got to see a cow being milked.

For the next two weeks (8,9) the children identified different fruits and vegetables and classified them by shapes and colors. They had a little tasting party which included a kiwi fruit and eggplant. They also molded fruits and vegetables from clay. They learned a song from Raffi called Apples and Bananas (Raffi Album, 1976). A trip to the produce section at Publix Supermarket was planned during the 10th week. The produce manager gave the children a taste of watermelon, cantelope and honey dew. Two children had never tasted honeydew and wanted more.

During weeks 11-12 we carefully looked at junk foods. We listened to Too Much Junk Food, by Stan and Jan Berenstain. We decided why certain foods were not good for us. We made an experience chart citing nutritious foods in one column and junk foods in the other. The children, in small cooperative learning groups looked through magazines for pictures to match the foods listed in the two columns. It was a colorful chart! The children composed and copied a letter addressed to different television networks urging them to have more nutritious advertisments. A dental hygenist visited our classroom during week 13 and the children, after listening to her, were able to answer simple questions regarding plaque, floss, cavity, decay and x-rays. They knew what a dental hygenists' job description consisted of. The children were aware of what foods were healthy to eat in order for teeth to grow strong and be decay free.

Children were made aware of the importance of dental check-ups. They pasted black beans on a sad-faced little girl to show her decayed teeth and white beans on a happy-faced little boy to show his healthy teeth. The next week (14) a trip to the Bakery Centre was planned. The children experienced being in a mini dental office and they sat in a dental chair, went up and down, wore a chest apron for protection from x-rays and were able to use dental instruments. A receptionists desk was also set up to make the setting real. The children had a wonderful experience and loved every moment of this trip!

During the 15th week children were introduced to a nutritionist. She explained what services she performed and showed the children picture food cards. They had to identify them and place them in the correct food groups, according to the food pyramid. After a discussion the children were able to name two healthy snacks and explain reasonably well why it is important to eat nutritious foods. The culminating activity consisted of a cooperative lesson whereby five children, in six groups, planned a well-balanced meal by pasting magazine pictures, or hand drawn pictures on paper plates.

The following week (16) teachers had to report back to work. Since the kindergarten children were now first graders a nutrition/fitness workshop was planned for two hours, one afternoon for the first grade teachers. Once

again the teachers discussed lesson plans and brainstormed how to make nutritious foods and fitness activities more attractive and exciting for the students. Another workshop (week 17) was held for parents, but this time letters were sent home in English, Spanish and Creole. The response was better than the first time. Twenty-five parents, out of 90 showed up. They were very cooperative, loved the snacks that were served and listened attentively. They were shown the food pyramid and we listed healthy snacks for their youngsters (Appendix F). Once again the importance of physical fitness was stressed. The parents left the workshop on a positive note and they all seemed pleased.

Weeks 18-20 the teachers involved the children with movement activities. These activities included running, stretching, bending, tag, kickball, and relay races. At first the children were not very enthusiastic because it meant that they had to move. By the second lesson they were actually looking forward to the varied activities. By using different body parts, one afternoon, they pretended to be astronauts by putting on pretend space suits, helmets and moonboots. Then they ran in place as they traveled to the moon. As they walked on the moon they used exaggerated slow steps. Since astronauts eat freeze dried foods in space they had freeze dried apple and banana chips for a snack. Then they took a rest on the carpet.

Since the classes had discussed all the different food

groups, the next two weeks (21-22) the children paid attention to the food pyramid and colored, cut, and pasted food pictures correctly on a blank pyramid. Most children did well. During weeks 23-24 classes planned to serve healthy Halloween snacks. The children brought in carrots, celery, and apples and together made a yogurt dip. They all enjoyed dipping their fruits and vegetables in the dip. Some children had never tasted celery and they really enjoyed it. They asked for more. We drank water, since that is healthier than drinking a soft drink and we learned that water is the single most important food substance. We also had sugar free orange punch, but the children did not care for it. It was during this time that a parent requested a conference. During this conference the parent mentioned that she brought home a hamburger and a bag of potato chips for her daughter. She was amazed that her daughter told her that the hamburger was not good for her since it contained too much fat and the chips, she said, were too salty!

A representative from the American Heart Association came to visit the classes the following week (25). She explained that the heart is the strongest muscle in the body and showed the children a plastic model of a human heart. She showed them how blood travels to and from the heart. She explained how certain foods contain fat and cholesterol and how arteries can get clogged. One little boy said that

that's what happened to his grandpa and he had to go to the hospital.

During week 26 we decided to conduct a nutrition/fitness poster contest among the classes. The children did a great job; some cut pictures out of magazines while others drew pictues of healthy foods. The winner in each class received a pineapple to take home and share with his family. So many posters were so good that five additional students received pineapples.

As we approached weeks 27-28, we thought about planning for a health/fitness fair. However the assistant prinipal who was extremely supportive of the project had left the school and there just did not seem to be enough time, so the idea was put on the back burner. In the meantime, Thanksgiving had just passed and we began thinking about the holiday season. We decided to gather healthy recipes and make a nutritious cookbook as a holiday gift. For two weeks we collected recipes, which were rather different and put together a cookbook. A sample of some recipes can be seen in Appendix G. The book came out very well. It was zeroxed and the children took it home.

Week 29 was a fun week. Children brought in different kinds of fruits, apples, pears, bananas, and created nutritious critters. They used raisins, strawberries, trail mix, nuts, and used toothpicks to hold everything together.

The next two weeks the children planned to serve parents a healthy breakfast and show them a sample fitness activity. They planned a menu consisting of orange juice, cereal, (choices - corn flakes, cherrios, raisin bran). One child suggested fruit loops and in a chorus the others shouted out "NO". When asked why one child replied, "because it has too much sugar." Fresh fruits and muffins were also on the menu. The teachers asked if the children would like to serve anything special to the parents. The children could not think of anything. The teacher suggested bagels and cream cheese. The children did not know what bagels were. Children were busy making placemats and invitations for the parents. Black and white computer printed invitations were run off and the children colored them. The following week, as a reminder colored computer printed invitations were sent home again (Appendix H).

The 32nd week was the breakfast. It was a beautiful cool and sunny morning and more children and adults attended than were expected. Twelve students and their parents or grandparents showed up. The participating teachers and the Director of Food and Nutrition attended. There were 41 people present. It was interesting to see children and parent eating habits. The three cereal choices were cherrios (in the form of tic, tac, toe), raisin bran and cornflakes. Most children chose the cherrios. Most parents chose raisin bran. One hispanic mother sprinkled sugar on

her child's cereal. Some adults put sugar on their cereal. Bagels and muffins were consumed quickly. The muffins, made with egg scramblers were gone in a flash. The bagels were served with light cream cheese and no one seemed to notice. It was interesting to note that no one mixed the fresh fruit, which consisted of strawberries, bananas, apples, pears, grapes, and cherries, with their cereal. The fruit was eaten separately and disappeared quickly. All the adults and children expressed their appreciation for this breakfast and had a wonderful, fun filled and informative morning. The Director of Food and Nutrition was extremely grateful that teachers took the time to discuss nutrition and fitness with youngsters, but also went out of their way to have this breakfast. She handed out coloring books and crayons to the children and magnets in the shape of the food pyramid, for the parents. She also mingled with parents and students and answered any concerns that were brought up.

The 33rd and final week the post nutrition and fitness surveys were administered to the 3 first grade classes. The teachers tallied all the responses and re-evaluated the program.

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem in this writer's work setting concerned young childrens' lack of proper nutrition and physical fitness activities. It was noted that youngsters were eating too much junk food and hardly exercised. They brought lunch to school brimming with sugar filled snacks and those that depended on cafeteria foods found them to be high in starch and sugar. Some children threw away their lunch. When children were asked to participate in walking or other forms of physcial exercise they appeared fatigued, listless and apathetic.

This writer decided to inform parents as well as children of the importance of eating nutritious foods and exercising daily. A workshop was set up for parents and weekly developmentally appropriate activities were planned for children. She further decided to approach the cafeteria manager and help change the school menu so it would contain more nutritious foods for the students.

Results

It was expected that during an eight month period kindergarten and first grade students would have the experience of being exposed to nutritious foods. It was further expected that 75 out of 90 students would chose to eat a healthy breakfast daily. Youngsters were exposed to

nutritious foods weekly through varied lessons including hands on, and oral presentations by resource people. Tables 4, 5 indicated that more than 75 students out of 90 chose to eat a healthy breakfast, daily.

Table 4

Comparison of the pre and post results of the Nutrition Survey

	No. of children	
	pre	post
1. A good breakfast should include:		
milk, eggs, toast	36	88
potato chips	54	02
2. Which of the following would be bad for you if you ate it every day?		
M & M's	40	80
fruit	50	10
3. Which of the following type of snack would you want to eat?		
raisins	23	76
chocolate bar	67	14
4. Which one of the following foods should you eat or drink at least once a day?		
fruit, vegetables, milk	21	79
soda, cookies	69	11

Note. Administered to 90 children.

Table 5
Comparision of the Pre and Post Nutrition and Fitness Survey

	No. of children			
	pre		post	
	yes	no	yes	no
1. I eat breakfast every day.....35	55		68	22
2. I sometimes throw away my lunch...54	36		18	72
3. I like to eat new foods.....44	46		83	7
4. I like to eat vegetables.....43	47		77	13
5. Do you think exercise (i.e. running, jumping, or walking) is good for you every day?.....40	50		80	10
6. I like to exercise.....34	56		86	4

Note. Administered to 90 students.

The tables further indicated that children were able to wisely choose healthy snacks, and eat their nutritious lunches daily. Their attitude toward a daily exercise program increased as they really looked forward to this part of their day with much gusto. It was further anticipated that approximately 40 parents out of 90 would attend the nutrition/fitness workshops that were presented at the school site. Unfortunately only 25 parents attended and since the attendance was so poor that the parent surveys

were sent home with all the children. Seventy eight surveys were returned and the results can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6
Results of Parent Nutrition and Physical Fitness Survey

	No. of parents	
	True	False
1. Children should eat breakfast every day.	74	4
2. Healthy snacks consist of peanut butter and celery sticks or fresh fruits.	76	2
3. Children should not eat foods contining too much salt.	73	5
4. Children should not eat foods containing too much fat.	72	6
5. Too much sugar causes tooth decay.	77	1
6. Children should have regular dental check-ups.	72	6
7. Children should exercise for at least 20 minutes three or more times a week.	66	12
8. Walking is an excellent form of exercise.	68	10
9. Vigorous activity will harm a child's cardiovascular system.	18	76
10. Fiber is found in whole grain cereals, fruits and vegetables.	64	14

Note. Based on 78 returned parent surveys.

The tables showed that parents are aware of healthy eating habits for their children. They also are aware that their children need exercise but more work is needed to convince them of the daily need.

Discussion

Many researchers (Bockoven & Fuller, 1991; Simons-Morton, et al, 1991; Folland, 1992; and Vogel, 1991), agree that school lunch programs are lacking nutritious foods and that school based programs must be initiated with the support and cooperation of teachers, parents and food service employees. They further agree that eating habits as well as physical activity of youngsters must be improved. That is why this writer chose such an important issue. She wanted children to be encouraged to eat a variety of nutritious foods and to develop positive attitudes toward healthier eating habits and physical exercise. Aronson (1988) wrote that parents and teachers must exhibit good eating habits in front of children. This writer certainly agrees because young children tend to imitate the adults around them. During one lesson the teacher tasted a newly roasted pumpkin seed and the children wanted to do the same. Through weekly activities, including much observation and note taking it was observed that children, if encouraged, do imitate adults and really will try new foods. Children also learned that by participating in exercises on a daily basis they will not get 'sick' nor will they collapse. Instead they will have lots of fun while they are strengthening their muscles. Gober and Franks (1988) stated that in order for young children to participate in daily exercise it must be presented in a fun manner. The adult must also take part

in the exercise as role modeling is most important. Other ways to get children involved in more physical activities included:

1. Participation in activity records, such as Physical Fitness for the Pre-School (Le Crone, H. and Le Crone M.J.). This allows children to be high stepping horses, graceful butterflies or measuring worms.

2. Participation in an animal activity record called Animals are Wonderful (Maynard, G., 1984) which allows children to pretend to be hopping frogs, jumping kangaroos or swinging elephants.

3. Participation in A Thriller For Kids, Dynamic Fitness Activities (Stewart, G., 1984) which allows creative fitness movements to popular music.

4. Children loved going through an obstacle course that was set up outside on the P.E. field. They developed spatial directions as they went over, under, around and through objects.

5. Children enjoyed running till the music stopped. All physical activities, and there are many more that can be added to the above list, must be planned with the child's safety and capabilities in mind.

In conclusion, it was noted that if given the opportunities young children will experiment with new foods. As the school breakfast project proved children, as well as adults, did not mind choosing from three healthy cereals.

They did not mind drinking skim milk, eating light cream cheese, muffins made with egg scramblers or fresh fruits. If children are exposed to positive eating habits they will more easily accept a new food item. Young children are also more willing to exercise daily if the activity is presented in a fun manner and if they see the adults and their peers participating.

It is further necessary that parents, as well as teachers, try to sway children away from the television set and get them outdoors to run, jump, or skip. Adults must also be aware of the snacks their children are eating. If carrot sticks, for example, are available, children will eat them instead of chips. While in school if youngsters see the adult tasting and eating all kinds of food and also exercising daily, it is hoped that these positive attitudes and habits will carry over into the home.

Recommendations

It is firmly recommended that the Department of Nutrition convinces the rest of the schools in the county that nutrition among students is of the utmost concern. Workshops for teachers are important because many teachers do not practice healthy eating habits or participate in an exercise program. Workshops for parents are desperately needed. Getting parents involved in school projects is a most difficult task. With so many diversified cultures and

varying backgrounds among children and parents that it is necessary for everyone to be familiar with nutritious foods and physical activities. Adults in the school must be sensitive to the needs of the community. Children must be made aware of their bodies, and how to take care of their bodies. It would be wonderful if children could be tracked from kindergarten to high school to see if participating in this nutrition/fitness program made any difference in their life.

Dissemination

This writer will share the results of this project with other primary teachers, the cafeteria staff and the county Director of Food and Nutrition. Inservice workshops, concerning nutrition/fitness will be instituted at the school site, inviting other primary teachers in the region. The school should continue to disseminate information by sending home the monthly Family Health Letter, entitled GET "W.I.T.H. I.T." ("WELLNESS IS THE HEALTHY IN THING"). Teachers, as well as students, are encouraged to write articles for this newsletter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

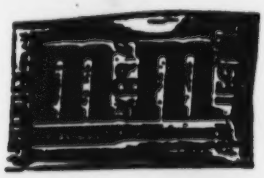
Nutrition Survey - Administered to 90 Students

Appendix A

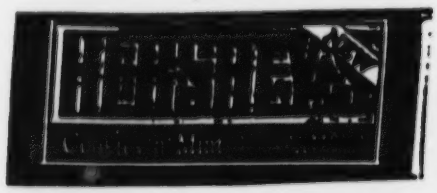
Nutrition Survey -Administered to 90 Students

1. A good breakfast should include:

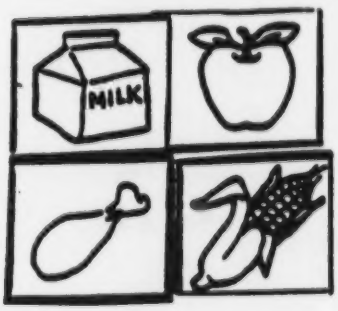
2. Which of the following would be bad for you if you ate it every day?



3. Which of the following types of snacks would you want?



4. Which one of following foods should you eat or drink at least once a day?



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APPENDIX B

Nutrition and Fitness Survey - Administered to 90 Students

Appendix B

Nutrition and Fitness Survey - Administered to 90 Students

1.	I eat breakfast every day.	yes	no
2.	I sometimes throw away my lunch.	yes	no
3.	I like to eat new foods.	yes	no
4.	I like to eat vegetables.	yes	no
5.	Do you think exercise (i.e. running, jumping, or walking is good for you every day?	yes	no
6.	I like to exercise.	yes	no

APPENDIX C

Parent Nutrition and Physical Fitness Post-Survey

Appendix C

Parent Nutrition and Physical Fitness Post-Survey

Please circle T for True and F for False.

	True	False	
1.	T	F	Children should eat breakfast every day.
2.	T	F	Healthy snacks consist of peanut butter and celery sticks or fresh fruits.
3.	T	F	Children should not eat foods containing too much salt.
4.	T	F	Children should not eat foods containing too much fat.
5.	T.	F	Sugar gives your child the necessary energy needed to carry him/her through the day.
6.	T	F	Too much sugar causes tooth decay.
7.	T	F	Children should have regular dental check-ups.
8.	T	F	Children should exercise for at least 20 minutes three or more times a week.
8.	T	F	Walking is an excellent form of exercise.
9.	T	F	Vigorous activity will harm a child's cardiovascular system.
10.	T	F	Fiber is found in whole grain cereals, fruits and vegetables.

APPENDIX D

Names and Addresses of TV Networks

Appendix D

Names and Addresses of TV Networks

1. ABC-TV
   Mr. Daniel Burke
   77 W. 66th Street
   New York, N.Y. 10023

2. CBS-TV
   Mr. Laurence A. Tisch
   51 W. 52nd Street
   New York, N.Y. 10019

3. NBC-TV
   Mr. Robert C. Wright
   30 Rockefeller Plaza
   New York, N.Y. 10112

4. FOX-TV
   Ms. Lucie Salhany
   10201 W. Pico Blvd.
   Los Angeles, Ca. 90035

5. Nickelodeon
   Ms. Gerry Laybourne
   1515 Broadway
   New York, N.Y. 10036

APPENDIX E

Introductory Letter to Parents

Appendix E

PARENTS' INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Parent(s),

We are beginning a series of learning experiences based on nutrition/fitness for young children. Your special skills and loving care at home can add "parent power" to start things cooking!

Here's how you can help:

1. Please be aware of your child's eating and exercise patterns.

2. Attend our parent workshops to get a full idea of what's happening at school.

3. Encourage, encourage, encourage food choices which promote good health.

Thanks for being our partner in your child's nutrition/fitness education.

Sincerely,

Appendix F

List of Nutritious Snacks

Appendix F

List of Nutritious Snacks

1. Lemonade on a stick: Freeze lemonade in small paper cups and insert wood stick for a handle before it freezes.
2. Make bird seed: Mix cereal, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and raisins together.
3. Low fat yogurt as a dip for raw vegetables or fruits.
4. Peanut butter sandwich with bananas or raisins.
5. Sour Cream Pie: Mix canned fruit cocktail with light sour cream and pour into a pie shell. Bake 20 minutes.
6. Make a yogurt shake.
7. Unsalted popcorn.
8. Whole grain muffins and a glass of skim milk.
9. Trail mix.
10. Juices, apple, orange, pineapple or cranberry.
11. Fresh fruits.
12. Melba Toast.

APPENDIX G

Sample Recipes

Sample Recipes

Turkey-Broccoli Casserole

Serves 6

- 2 10-ounce packages frozen broccoli *or* 2 bunches fresh broccoli
- 4 cups of cubed cooked turkey
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 10¾-ounce cans condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup grated Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon melted butter *or* margarine

Steam broccoli until tender; drain. Grease an 11×7-inch casserole. Place turkey on the bottom and arrange broccoli over turkey. Combine mayonnaise, soup, curry powder, and lemon juice. Pour over broccoli. Combine cheese, bread crumbs, and butter; sprinkle over casserole. Bake in a 350° oven for 30 minutes.

Sweet Potato Pie

2 medium sweet potatoes, boiled, and mashed

1 cup sugar

3 eggs, beaten

1/4 cup margarine, melted

3/4 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

pinch of cinnamon

pinch of nutmeg

1 tablespoon flour

1 9-inch pie shell

1. Wash hands.
2. Mix ingredients together and pour into unbaked pie shell.
3. Bake at 400 degrees until brown (about 35 minutes).

This recipe serves 8.

One serving counts as a bread and 1/4 cup of vegetable for a snack.

Red, Green, and White Christmas Wreath

(a vegetable platter)—

2 cups raw cauliflower pieces

2 cups raw broccoli pieces

1 pint cherry tomatoes

1 3/4-ounce package dry Italian dressing

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup sour cream

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

2 tablespoons vinegar

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

1. Wash hands.
2. Wash all the vegetables and arrange around the rim of your platter.
3. Mix all the remaining ingredients and pour into a serving bowl.
4. Place bowl in the middle of the vegetables.

Count as a vegetable for snack, lunch, or supper

CAJUN SEAFOOD AND SAUSAGE GUMBO

- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 (12-ounce) container fresh standard oysters, undrained
- Vegetable cooking spray
- 2 cups frozen cut okra
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1½ cups diced green bell pepper
- 1½ cups diced celery
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ⅓ cup water
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2½ teaspoons paprika
- ¾ teaspoon dried whole thyme
- ½ teaspoon dried whole oregano
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground red pepper
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ pound smoked turkey sausage, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 2 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice
- 1 (14½-ounce) can no-salt-added whole tomatoes, undrained and chopped
- 1 (13¾-ounce) can no-salt-added chicken broth
- 2 small bay leaves
- 1 pound small fresh unpeeled shrimp
- ½ pound fresh lump crabmeat, drained
- 6 cups hot cooked long-grain rice (cooked without salt or fat)

Place ⅓ cup flour in a shallow baking pan. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until very brown, stirring every 15 minutes. Set the browned flour aside.

Drain oysters, reserving the liquid; set both aside.

Coat a large Dutch oven with cooking spray; place over medium heat until hot. Add okra and next 4 ingredients; cook 12 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently. Stir in browned flour. Add reserved oyster liquid, ⅓ cup water, and next 13 ingredients; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat, and simmer, uncovered, 1 hour.

Peel and devein shrimp. Add shrimp, oysters, and crabmeat; stir well. Cover and simmer 10 minutes or until shrimp are done and edges of oysters begin to curl. Discard bay leaves. Serve over rice. Yield: 3 quarts (serving size: 1 cup gumbo and ½ cup rice).

[illegible]

Quesadillas

Flour tortillas

Grated cheese

1. Wash hands.
2. Place one tortilla in a frying pan.
3. Sprinkle with grated cheese.
4. When the cheese melts, cover with another tortilla, and flip like a cheese sandwich.
5. When the tortillas are warm and the cheese is melted, remove from heat, and serve by cutting in 6 wedges each.

Allow 1/2 cup cheese and one tortilla per child to count as a meat and bread for supper or lunch.

WINTER FRUIT SALAD

- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 5 cups loosely packed torn romaine lettuce
- 5 cups loosely packed torn red leaf lettuce
- 2¼ cups coarsely chopped, unpeeled Red Delicious apple (about ¾ pound)
- 2 cups coarsely chopped fresh orange sections (about 3 large oranges)
- 2 tablespoons chopped almonds, toasted

Combine vinegar and next 5 ingredients; stir with a wire whisk until well blended. Set aside.

Combine lettuces, apple, and orange in a large bowl; toss gently. Add vinegar mixture, tossing gently to coat. Sprinkle with almonds. Yield: 8 servings (serving size: 1½ cups).

[illegible]

SESAME BROCCOLI

Team this easy side dish from Jean Thrash, of Dearborn, Michigan, with steak and potatoes for a quick after-work menu.

- 1½ pounds fresh broccoli
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Trim off large leaves of broccoli and ends of stalks. Wash under cold running water; separate into spears, and arrange in a vegetable steamer over boiling water. Cover and steam 7 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain; place in a serving bowl.

Heat oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add sesame seeds; sauté until lightly browned. Add lemon juice, soy sauce, and sugar; bring to a boil. Drizzle over broccoli, tossing gently to coat. Yield: 4 servings (serving size: 1 cup broccoli).

[illegible]

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APPENDIX H

Parent Invitation

You are cordially invited
to have breakfast
with your child
When: Dec. 21, 1993
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Where:
Elementary
(follow the signs)

Looking forward to
seeing you there!

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Appendix I

Parent Thank-You Letter

Appendix I

Thank you letter to parents

Dear Parent(s),

You have been most valuable partners in your child's nutrition/fitness education. We know that this is the important foundation for continued learning in the the future. But right now, what are the clues to help you notice how much your child has learned? We will look for better food and physical fitness habits or attitudes as well as improved health. Ask yourself if your child shows:

a) improved interest in eating breakfast, lunch, dinner or healthy snacks.

b) increased willingness in trying new or previously rejected foods.

c) increased willingness to take part in daily fitness exercises.

d) less fatigue.

e) more attention and enthusiasm in preparing, serving and eating nutritious foods.

We are pleased when we notice even the smallest progress in our pint-sized learners.

Thanks for your help in this project!.

Sincerely,